



**Liz Gustafson, MSW**  
State Director  
Pro-Choice Connecticut  
**Testimony for Public Hearing**  
Human Services Committee  
**March 10, 2022**

S.B. 284: AN ACT INCREASING THE AGE FROM EIGHT TO EIGHTEEN YEARS FOR AN INCOME-ELIGIBLE PERSON TO OBTAIN MEDICAL ASSISTANCE REGARDLESS OF IMMIGRATION STATUS.

Dear Representative Abercrombie, Senator Moore, Senator Berthel, Representative Case, and esteemed members of the Human Services Committee, my name is Liz Gustafson, State Director of Pro-Choice Connecticut. We testify in strong support of S.B. 284: An Act Increasing the Age from 8 to 18 years for an Income Eligible Person to Obtain Medical Assistance Regardless of Immigration Status.

Healthcare is a human right, and everyone deserves access to high-quality, affordable healthcare regardless of their race, gender, sexuality, zip code, immigration or economic status. As a State that prides itself on leading the fight for reproductive freedom, illustrated by the critical step we took in 2021 to expand access to HUSKY for children ages 0-8 years old, **we have been provided with another opportunity to act on behalf of health equity & reproductive healthcare access for all.**

Our current healthcare system has been built on decades of racism and white supremacy. This has led to millions of people who can get pregnant facing structural barriers when trying to obtain such coverage and care, based solely on their immigration status. Research by the Guttmacher Institute has found that insurance coverage gaps continue to grow, and immigrants aged 15 to 49 who were noncitizens had three times the uninsured rate of U.S.-born people or naturalized citizens<sup>1</sup>. This underscores the importance of ensuring no one is left behind when implementing policies that expand access to healthcare, as **expansions to health insurance coverage are crucial for sexual and reproductive health and rights**. Barriers & exclusion from coverage harms everyone's health, and our state has the responsibility to ensure every resident regardless of immigration status and age can exercise their basic right to protect their health, their families' health, and their economic well-being.

Immigrant communities face a number of barriers which can include a lack of reliable transportation, language barriers and restrictive immigration policies, and expanding access to quality, affordable healthcare coverage is just a crucial step towards addressing ongoing reproductive injustice & health inequity. Early treatment effectively reduces the amount an individual will pay for healthcare in the long term by preventing health issues from developing further, and as taxpayers funding state health programs, immigrant communities deserve an equal and fair opportunity to access the very programs they fund. Furthermore, insurance coverage is even more critical as we continue to navigate the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, as people are now seeking care in an overburdened healthcare system in unprecedented circumstances.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.guttmacher.org/article/2021/04/uninsured-rate-people-reproductive-age-ticked-between-2016-and-2019>

**Wherever we are from- when we are able to make decisions that are best for our lives, our families thrive and we build communities in which we can all participate with dignity.** Our work does not end with expanding access up to age 18. In the long term, we need to ensure that all immigrants, including parents and adults, are able to have access to HUSKY and the healthcare they need. The state of Connecticut must create a long term plan to expand HUSKY access to our whole immigrant community.

**Storytelling is a powerful tool for change, and the courageous testimony provided in support of S.B. 284 has only affirmed that our state's immigrant residents & their families cannot wait.** We all deserve access to essential healthcare, and deserve dignity and respect when doing so. Advancing the sexual and reproductive health and well-being of families and communities requires ongoing action from policymakers, and S.B. 284 would ensure that children will not age out of coverage once they turn 9 years old and be left without healthcare.

Pro-Choice Connecticut urges the committee & the legislature to support S.B. No 824, and ask the committee to work towards opening access to all immigrants regardless of age moving forward.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Liz Gustafson  
State Director  
Pro-Choice Connecticut